

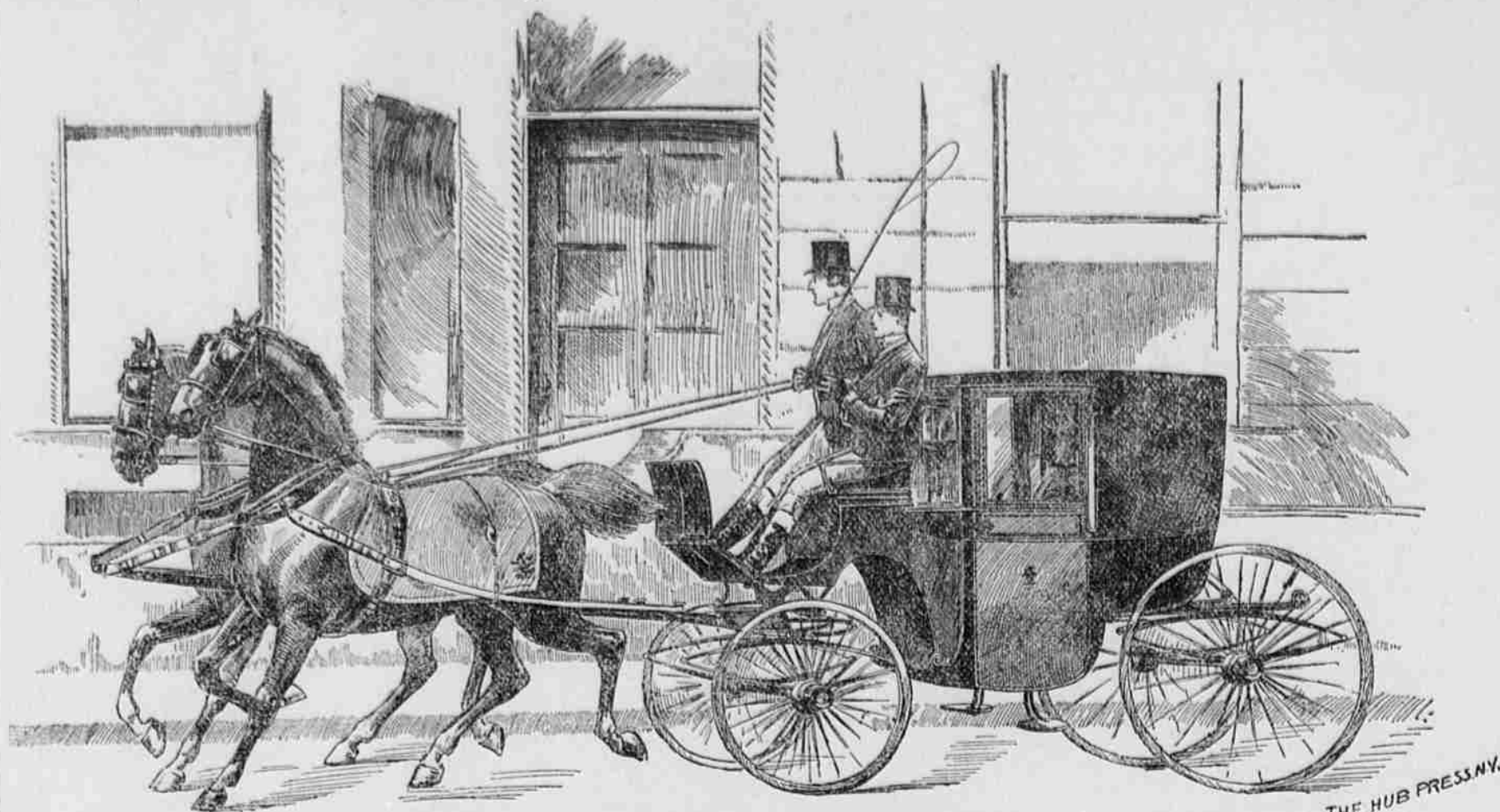
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SEVERAL NIGHTS IN ROME.

AMUSING EXPERIENCES OF A NEWS-
PAPER MAN AS "SUPER."

The Queer Medley of Human Beings Who
Made Up the Corps of Citizens, Barba-
rians and Soldiers—Evolving Order Out
of Chaos at Double-Quick Time.

Among the scores of supernumeraries, or, to use stage vernacular, plain "supers," on the stage at Albaugh's Opera House, during the rendition of the spectacular play of "Claudius Nero," recently, was a newspaper man who was anxious to get an inside view of the great spectacle. He presented himself to Mr. Dowley, the advance manager, or drill master, and was accepted. This was on Sunday preceding the opening night. The supernumeraries and extra ladies to the number of at least two hundred were rehearsing in the Light Infantry Armory, just beneath the theatre. They were not in costume, but simply attired in their every-day dress; and what a variegated scene they presented!

There were little girls and big ones. Old girls and young ones. Fat damsels and slim ones. Some were attired in the height of fashion. Others wore clothing which betokened that the fickle goddess of fortune was not smiling upon them. Then, too, there were widows in their sombre weeds and chubby-faced tots, all adding to the general effect.

The men presented an even more motley appearance than the females. Some were clever, gentlemanly well-dressed fellows, who had gone on the stage "just for the fun of the thing." The "masher" was there, too, with waxed mustache and boutonniere in his coat lapel and an eye single to capturing some of the giddy "extra ladies." Then there were men in hard luck and shabby uniforms, who had counted railroad ties "many a time," some of them having hardly enough clothing on their persons to wad a shotgun. Smooth-faced boys and grizzly old men with patriarchal whiskers. One was a youth, evidently of good family, who was "playing truant" from his school in order to satisfy his longings for the stage and to figure in "Claudius Nero," in a glittering suit of armor. Another was an old fellow whose garments had turned green from long exposure to wind and weather, and who was willing to play "super" for a whole week in order to get the stipend paid by the company. Still another was a young man from the West, an ex-cavalryman, who bears an ugly scar on his neck as a result of his participation in the Indian trouble which terminated in the capture of old Geronimo. An ex-member of the English Royal Horse Guards, a tall, fine-looking fellow, was there also, as was a nimble jack tar, who has spent the best portion of his life on the ragging main, and a former circus clown, who had worn himself out in the business. In its entirety the gathering presented quite a variegated panoramic view of human nature as she is. There were regulars, both male and female, who make it a practice of going on the stage whenever their services are needed, and "fresh fish," who were going on for the first time, and did not know the difference between a drop-curtain and a wing. The latter suffered many practical jokes at the hands of the regulars.

One timid-looking, stage-struck "fresh fish" from South Washington, a short, buxom girl, asked a regular what part she would be expected to take.

"Go to the manager at once," was the reply, "and ask him to give you a good thinking part. He will do it."

She made the request as directed, and the urbane manager, with a half-concealed smile, said: "All right, miss; I will give you a heavy thinking part, in which you can let your thoughts have full play."

The rehearsals without costumes are a comical-looking sight. Long lines of men and women standing in an attitude of waiting while the bustling little manager, Mr. Dowley, in a commanding voice would give the commands: "Get ready for the procession in the second act. The praetorians will form here, with the lictors next. Now you men who are warriors form here, and the Egyptians next and then the citizens," etc.

Twenty marines from the barracks in East Washington comprised the band of praetorian warriors. They were in charge of a sergeant and went through their parts with military precision. The newspaper man was cast as a Roman citizen in the first and third acts, a war-

rior in the second, and a barbarian or Gaul in the last act.

After a thorough series of rehearsals in the Light Infantry Armory of the fire scene, the processions, groupings and shouts, the throng of extras was dismissed after all their names had been taken by the managers and instructions given for them to be at the theatre on the following day for a full-dress rehearsal with music.

At last the expected night arrived when the first performance was to be given. The supernumeraries were assigned to a large barny room on the E-street side of the building, where the male costumes were kept, while the extra ladies were given two rooms along the hallway, all being just beneath the stage.

What a bustling, bustling scene was presented as the extras began to arrive shortly before seven o'clock; but the experienced directors will bring perfect order of it when the bell tinkles for the curtain to rise for the first act. Here comes a poor shivering "super" in from the icy atmosphere outside. He is without an overcoat and his suit of well-worn clothing was made for spring and summer wear. He is shaking violently from the cold as he disappears among the rubbish under the stage and through the door into the large dressing-room already crowded with men donning their armor and costumes. In a few minutes the seedy-looking and half-frozen individual appears at the stairway leading up to the stage. The dingy summer suit has given place to a glittering Roman costume. Burnished breastplate, shimmering helmet and shield, flowing red horse hair, yellow sandals, flesh-colored tights, and gleaming sword and spear, the impoverished being of a few moments before stands forth in all the pomp and glory of one of Nero's warriors. In one hand he holds a spear and in the other a burnished shield. White tights cover the lower part of his anatomy, and in lieu of his odd and dilapidated shoes he wears a pair of Roman sandals.

It is now 7:45 o'clock, and one of the stage men passes along the hallway between the dressing-rooms shouting: "Fifteen minutes! Fifteen minutes!"

This shout acts like magic. The "supers" and extra ladies swarm from their dressing-rooms, and the hallway is soon filled with a surging mass of variegated colors and brilliancy—Senators in their purple robes; Egyptians in their picturesque striped suits of many colors and odd-looking hoods; citizens in their airy red, green, and blue skirts; priests wearing long white gowns; lictors in golden armor bearing queer-looking axes; long lines of marines attired in the dazzling and bespangled armor of praetorian warriors; slaves, barbarians in wolf skins with their peculiar armored helmets and battle-axes; Vestal Virgins in white bearing aloft large lighted candles; male and female gladiators in flashing armor carrying Roman broadswords; Nazarenes, Hindus, and eight or ten jet-black supernumeraries, both men and women, attired in fantastic costumes, as bearers of Nero's triumphal cars. This is the scene presented under the stage when the orchestra strikes up the overture.

The newspaper man, clad in tights, sandals, and a bright-green gown, representing a Roman citizen, mingled with the eleven other citizens and waited for the final call, which came about five minutes before 8 o'clock.

"All hands up stairs and take your places for the procession!"

Then what a scrambling up the two narrow stairways leading to the stage! The wings were soon packed almost to suffocation, while the managers and members of the company darted hither and thither arranging the warriors, citizens, and others in their respective places.

"Ready! Ready!" went around in a hoarse stage whisper, as Manager Max Freeman got his cue from those on the stage in the first scene and the orchestra struck up a lively march.

"Go on, citizens! For Heaven's sake, hurry!" excitedly exclaimed the manager. "Run on, and shout as you go! You other fellows, about! Shout now! Let her go!"

And a great volume of sound arose from the concourse of actors and extras, as the citizens, staffs in hand, scampered across the stage and took their places on the opposite side of the stage. Then came the glittering pageant, with Nero on his car, while the air was literally filled with shouts of "Hail! Hail!" etc.

The first act over, the citizens and Egyptians are hustled down stairs to the dressing-room in order to don the bright armor of warriors for striking tableaux and processions in the second and third acts. All is confusion in the dressing-room as this change is taking place, and the light from the single gas jet is almost obscured by the throng of men that surround it. The noise, too, is deafening as the armors and swords clank together, and the impatient men shout and swear at mis-laid and broken costumes, ill-fitting helmets, and the like. The newspaper man was given a helmet fully two sizes too small for his head and a badly-battered breast-plate, but he promptly assumed the dignity of a Roman war-

rior and tramped proudly up stairs with his armored brethren.

The second act required all the men and girls to stand on porticos and stairways during its entire rendition, forming a brilliant and picturesque background during the circensian games (or specialty acts) and the performance of the trained lions. As a result of this long stand the men and girls were quite stiff in their lower limbs when they again went down stairs, when the curtain fell, to remove the armor and reappear as plain citizens, Egyptians and Nazarenes in act three, in which they appeared as the "mob hydra" in the burning of Rome. Mingling among the mob of "supers" on the stage in this scene were several members of the company, who moved in and around the mob exhorting the latter in emphatic whispers to shout, act in an excited manner, and do other things that a mob would naturally do under such circumstances. This exhorting was so cleverly done that it was not noticeable to the audience.

In the last act the newspaper man, as well as his fellow Roman citizens and the Egyptians, hustled down to the dressing-room again, and each of them donned a wolf's hide and an antique and fantastic-looking steel headgear, and, seizing battle axes, they rushed up stairs again to participate in the final tableau in the woods where Nero kills Acte and himself, and the cross, "In hoc signo vinces," appears in the sky.

Now the curtain is down and the orchestra is playing a lively air while the audience is dispersing. Behind the scenes the male and female auxiliaries are rushing pell mell down stairs to remove their costumes and reënter their everyday habits. The men's dressing-room was not only overcrowded but it was warm, and the mass of packed humanity wriggled about like snakes as they removed their tights and ancient garbs and bustled about in the gloomy corners searching for their clothing. There are no facilities in the dressing-rooms for hanging up one's attire, and the men were compelled to pile their clothing in corners and about on the floor. In consequence of this there was a sad jumble of garments and shouts of "Who has got my shoes?" "Where are my shirt?" "My necktie is gone," etc., could be heard on every side, adding to the general din and confusion.

Finally the last "super" and extra lady disappeared down the stairway leading to the cold and cheerless street, and the below-stair apartments were left to solitude and the grim old watchman.

At the second night's performance and during the remainder of the week the newspaper man was cast as an Egyptian, to change in the second act, who has just gone on, "don'tcher know," to have some fun and flirt with the girls; the Government clerk, who does it just for a little excitement and variation from the daily office routine; the youth of scant means, who, in addition to being somewhat stage-struck, wants the \$1.50 or \$2 paid for the week's work for spending money. Then there is the seedy old gentleman, who plays "super" for the stipend; the regular, who haunts the stage entrance all the week looking for an "engagement," and, last but not least, the marine or regular soldier, who takes this means to make a few extra pennies on his night off.

Among the girls there is also some variety. One can tell the regular girls by their general carriage and deportment. They understand the work they are called upon to do by intuition, and go about it systematically. They have nothing whatever to say to "supers," and promptly suppress the latter when they attempt to "get gay," as the phrase goes.

One buxom country girl from Maryland, who made her first appearance as an "extra lady" with Nero, was literally overjoyed at the attention she received from the "supers." She wore tights in the character of one of the Roman gladiators, and, being quite comely of face and form, found hosts of admirers among the Romans, praetorians, Gauls, and others. They flocked about her, introduced each other, made love to her, and indulged in unlimited quantities of flattery, until she proudly declared in the ladies' dressing-room that she had "a mash" on every man in the house, from the leading actor down to the humblest "super." She did not know in her country simplicity that the majority of them were "guying," and she proudly declared:

"Oh, girls, I have got them all on a string." There was another "extra lady" who made her first appearance with the blare of Roman trumpets and under Roman banners in "Nero." She was very slender, and her tights hung about her limbs like a sheet wrapped around a beanpole. She viewed her anatomy in a piece of

broken looking-glass and then beseeched the manager to make her a Nazarene woman, so that she could wear a long gown. The manager was inexorable, however, and refused to make the change.

A young girl scarcely fifteen years of age deceived her parents by telling them she would have to work in a confectionery store every evening during the week. She appeared on the stage Monday evening, but on the following night her mother learned the truth, and just as her stage-struck daughter was about to go up stairs for the first act the irate parent appeared at the dressing-room door and compelled her daughter to remove her stage paraphernalia and resume her street dress. Then she seized the girl by one of her ears and led her triumphantly down stairs to the street, while the "supers" laughed and cheered.

Among the men was an old fellow with a snowy-white mustache, who has seen at least sixty winters and as many summers. He was tall and as straight as an arrow and strutted about with the air of a Caesar. The men and girls all declared that the old man was "stuck on his shape," as he was scrupulously careful, brought a box of make-up with him, painted his cheeks, powdered his face, blacked his eyebrows, and arranged himself with all the care of a star actress. He was quiet and had but little to say to any one, but he took great delight in passing before the doors of the ladies' dressing-rooms.

THE JAHRMARKT.

It Is a Big Success and Will Continue This Week.

"Nothing succeeds like success," is an old saying, but a true one. The brilliant success of the "Jahrmarkt" of the Concordia Church, now being conducted at the Washington Light Infantry Armory, is a good illustration of what industry, pluck, skill, and good humor combined can do in this city. Since the auspicious opening on Monday night, with its splendor of lights, sweetness of music, suave speeches, and pleasing sights generally, one enjoyable evening has succeeded the other.

Liberal donations, tasteful presents, artistic decorative skill, and the untiring industry of devoted lady attendants united in filling attractively-ornamented booths and stands with choice articles and every nook and corner of the big hall with things worth seeing, admiring, and having. An ever-changing programme of entertainments has amused hundreds of spectators, the principal participants being a corps of young ladies, handsomely uniformed, who executed a military drill on two evenings; the dancing classes of Professors Sheldon and Montgomery; Messrs. Frank L. Neumeyer, Hans Robert, George Barnhart, Wood, Wilson, the Germania Maennerchor, etc.

The "Jahrmarkt" is to be continued all through the present week.

Off for the Golden Gate.

The first of this season's Pennsylvania Railroad tours to the Pacific Coast left New York at 8 o'clock yesterday morning in a sumptuous vestibuled train of palace cars. The party consisted of 115 ladies and gentlemen from different parts of the North and East. They were in charge of Mr. Colin Studds, the well-known tourist agent of the road, who will look after their comfort and convenience until they reach home again. The party was also accompanied by Mrs. H. F. Bender as chaperone. The train reached Washington at 1:30 o'clock, resuming its journey southward after a stop of half an hour by way of the Richmond and Danville, Atlanta, Mobile, and Montgomery will be taken in on the way to New Orleans, which will be reached on Monday morning. Here a stay of two days will be made. Thence the train will steam on to the Golden Gate by way of El Paso, Tucson, and Los Angeles. The return journey will be made by way of Salt Lake, Denver, Omaha, Chicago, and Pittsburg. It is bound to be a delightful excursion. March 21 is the date fixed for arrival in New York.

The Late Dr. George T. Cook.

At a meeting of the examiners of the Medical Division, Pension Bureau, held yesterday, resolutions were adopted deploring the death of Dr. George Tottingham Cook, late a member of the division, and tendering to the family of the deceased the heartfelt sympathy of his late associates. The committee which drew up the resolutions consisted of J. C. Bishop, M. D.; F. J. Woodman, M. D., and W. C. Mason, M. D.

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